

“Rum diddle, rum diddle, rum diddle, rum diddle,  
Deep in the caverns of our mountains,  
Rum diddle, rum diddle, rum diddle, rum diddle,  
Live the gnomes, the busy little people, who do the work of kind hearted folk.  
When the seeds must go to sleep,  
Nic, nac, nic nac knock,  
Gnomes carry them into caverns deep...”

-excerpt from our late autumn Circle

Dear Parents,

November has come and passed, and the children are growing and changing along with the season!

On our first snowy forest day, the children were amazed to see how busy a place the forest is, as well as the lawn at Will Rogers. They saw a few little squirrel footprints, then noticed some that were larger, some without toes (decided to be a deer), and one strange round print in company with human footprints (a print from an elder's cane). The children followed the prints here and there, and discussed what creatures might have left them. They talked about what the creatures were up to, traveling through. It was as if the forest gained a whole new element of life with the discovery of wildlife footprints in snow, as the presence of animals is more transparent without these clues to their passing.

In the classroom, the children play, as usual, and are learning each day how to communicate with one another, and how to be together. We were able to finish up the leaf baby sewing craft, and worked on our lanterns for the Lantern Walk. The children painted with watercolors coffee filters, first, then, we cut them into small pieces. Next, we glued them to the jars, and added a fancy starry handle. On the day of the lantern walk, the children were able to see all of the lanterns lit together, as we lit them at story time.

The children heard the stories Winifred Witch, Mother Holle, the Golden Lantern, and Five Little Buns in the Bakery Shop.

Winifred Witch is a simple story about a kind witch who is searching for her golden kitty. She comes across Mother Apple and Pumpkin Mother, who do not know where her kitty is, but, share an apple and pumpkin with her, respectively. Finally, Winifred Witch runs into Autumn Wind, who blows a pile of leaves away to reveal a sleeping golden kitty beneath. The story has plenty of repetition, and a kitty, so, it was well-loved!

Mother Holle, a fairy tale, is a story about a girl who is kind and hardworking, despite being overworked and underappreciated by her stepmother and stepsister. The girl loses her spindle in the well one day, and her stepmother says she must retrieve it. The girl jumps into the well, seeing no other

choice, and in a new land passes by a bread oven. She takes the bread out, which was baked, upon the bread's request, so it would not burn. She helped an apple tree which called for her to shake its heavy load of fruit from laden branches, so the branches would not break. She then lives with Mother Holle, who gives her a place to stay in exchange for help. Even though the girl likes to live with Mother Holle, she soon becomes homesick, and asks to return to her home. Mother Holle gives the girl her spindle, thanks her for her service, and sends her off through a door. When the girl passes over the threshold, a golden rain shower falls upon her, and she is covered with gold from head to toe. When the girl returns home, the greedy stepmother wants gold for her own lazy daughter. She has her daughter go after a spindle in the well the next day, but, in the new land, the lazy girl does not help the bread loaves out of the oven, and leaves them to burn. She refuses to help shake the apples from the tree, and the branches break under the weight of the fruit. She does not help Mother Holle as the old woman wishes. Mother Holle sends the girl home soon after she arrives, and, instead of a golden shower as she passes over the threshold, she gets a shower of sticky pitch that covers her from head to toe as long as she lives.

The Golden Lantern is a story about a girl who travels to the top of the Mountain of the Sun, so she might find a spark to rekindle her dimming lantern. She learns from Father Sun that, as long as she carries light and warmth in her heart, her lantern will glow brightly, too, and she can keep her light glowing even when Father Sun is away.

For the two days before our break, the children participated in a puppet story-song, "Five little buns in the bakery shop." Each child had an animal who came to buy a bun in the shop. They practiced waiting their turn, being gentle with the animals, and very basic backwards counting.

For Circle time this month, we began with a game called Pumpkin King. It was well-loved by the children, as each child got a turn to sit on the huge pumpkin in the center of the circle, while the rest of us sang and pretended to hide a little pumpkin, for the pumpkin king or queen to find. When the king or queen guessed correctly who was hiding the pumpkin, the pumpkin hider got a turn being king or queen.

We continued with a late autumn Circle. It is a journey following gnomes into Mother Earth's cave, where they are bringing seeds for safekeeping from winter's cold. Lanterns light the way through the darkness to Mother Earth's cave, so warm and deep. This Circle has really nice polarities between loud and whispering voices, stomping and tip-toeing steps, staccato rhythmic speech and sing-songy-flowy tunes, and big movement and resting moments. These polarities, similar to the in and out breaths in the rhythm of our school days, capture the children's attention, and make it more possible for them to focus and remain engaged and comfortable throughout the duration of the Circle. The story is beautiful, too, and really captures what is happening right now, as all of nature is preparing for a long winter's rest, and we all seek a feeling of warmth and comfort.

As the days become shorter and colder, and winter settles in, it is important for the children to hear stories, similar to the one in our late autumn Circle, about warmth, safety, rest, and comfort. Stories with these elements will help them to feel comfortable and in tune with the natural progression of the seasons, as the natural world around us slows down for a long winter rest. As we become busy with holiday plans, it can be difficult to stick to our routines and rhythms, but, whenever possible, it is

soothing to both children and adults alike when we can honor this change in season, and bring warmth into our lives in every way possible, By honoring our usually daily routines as closely as possible, we are able to help the children to continue feeling secure and held, even amidst the busyness of the coming season.

Here is a link to an article about the importance of warmth-- it speaks to the importance of both physical and emotional warmth. I hope to share warmth of many sorts with the children in the coming days, and look forward to honoring Mother Earth's message to slow down and care for each other as we move toward the Winter Solstice.

<http://www.seastarwaldorfschool.com/sea-star-initiative/why-does-waldorf-education-talk-about-warmth-so-much/>

Wishing you days full of warmth, love, and light,

Miss Cassie